



Electric Board APPROVED MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING February 20, 2019

The Electric Board convened in a Board Meeting on February 20, 2019 at One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road, Room 1300, Directors Conference Room, Austin, Texas.

Board Chair Pomikahl called the Board Meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Randy Pomikahl, David Johnson, Delwin Goss, Robert Bowne, Mark Weaver, Gabe Flores, Nicole Stasek

Members Not in Attendance: David Dixon, Robert Schmidt and Ben Brenneman

Staff in Attendance: Richard Anderson (DSD), Rick Arzola (DSD), Eric Zimmerman (DSD), Marty Starrett(DSD), Beth Culver(DSD), Hyatt Dunn(DSD), James Smith(DSD)

- 1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION:** Bob Sever and Marvin Pace (AE)
- 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes from the December 19, 2019 meeting was approved. Vice Chair member Johnson made a motion to accept the minutes. Board member Goss seconded, and the motion passed 7-0
- 3. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:**
 - a. Austin Criteria Manual:** Bob Sever with Austin Energy explains to the Board and DSD staff on why Austin Energy is refusing to energize in certain situations in particular to the point of service. Based up on a gentleman's agreement, when there was a conduit that was ran from the service to transformer, an inspector would have to come out and do an inspection. On that agreement, Austin Energy decided to perform the inspection on that conduit if City Electrical inspections would inspect the meters on the wall. This is why Austin Energy was looking at things and DSD inspectors were looking at things which made the inspection at the point of service "cross-eyed." DSD staff is requesting a written formal method of understanding in order to honor such an agreement. DSD staff also pointed out about the main disconnect on buildings. Stakeholders with the City of Austin, being Austin Energy and the electrical board along with the fire department had a lot of input on were the main disconnect was going to be and how many handles you could have on it and they did not want to have to go all over the buildings to shut off 6 breakers at each service point to have it disconnected. So the fire department had a lot of input into the Criteria Manual. DSD staff also points out that there approximately 35 items in the Criteria Manual that refer to the NEC. Staff recommends to Board and Austin Energy that some of those 35 items would need to be implemented into City Electrical ordinance. Board recommends that the service point needs to be defined clearly in the criteria manual and inspections need to be defined on who does the inspection on the raceway conduits in the ground, is it the inspection department or Austin Energy. As of now it is clearly not defined on who does the inspection. For the next writing of the criteria manual and the electric ordinance, a much clearer definition must be written to alleviate any confusion and frustration where contractors are installing to the NEC and inspectors are approving but Austin Energy is not energizing it. DSD staff informs Board and AE, after discussions that AE still wanted the gentleman's agreement until the ordinance was changed, that building inspection will inspect up to the NEC. If there is additional requirements, then staff and AE would need to look at it and perhaps come up with a formal method of understanding. DSD

staff reminds board and AE, that the NEC is the minimal standard that we have set forth in our adopted electrical ordinance and cannot enforce anything above that. DSD staff informs board and AE, that DSD will publish a “letter from the chief” monthly newsletter updating contractors and stakeholders of news and articles, dates of no inspection due to training purposes and other important changes, so that communication awareness is distributed to the Austin community.

- b. Contractor Registration:** DSD staff Beth Culver is recommending an overall comprehensive contractor registration program that would extend beyond electrical contractor registration. Currently in the works, parts of is coming out of the demolition contractor registration. Board is still requesting the enforcement to be put back into the Building Criteria Manual after a year and half of talks with DSD. Subcontractors are the root of the problem and they are continuing to do unlicensed work and the board is suggesting that something has to be done soon to protect the citizens of Austin or else consequences should follow. Chair Pomikahl is questioning DSD staff if they still want to put the registration and enforcement back into the ordinance. DSD at the present time wants to wait and see on what the stakeholders want with enforcement. DSD feels that going thru the stakeholder process for demolition contractor registration and then going beyond demolition, DSD will then get a clear understanding on what the public will tolerate. Since there is not enough staffing for enforcement, DSD wants to make sure that it is enforceable and enough staffing is available.
- c. Strategic Planning and Longtime Goals.** A few board members wanted to look into the board’s future and identify needed goals for 2019. One of a few items that was agreed on was the Contractor Registration. All felt that this must be fixed and implemented back into the ordinance and into the building code for needed enforcement among subcontractors who are not licensed and doing work not up to code. Communication with Austin Energy on the revision to fix or amend the Austin Criteria Manual and to look into the NEC at the end of the year. Board has recommended a small electrical work group to be held weekly to go over these items with other possible suggestions at our next meeting.
- d. Update on Electrical Inspections –** Eric Zimmerman with Residential electrical inspections inform the board that his staff are currently 7 business days behind. A large part was a combination of losing one inspector due to retirement and medical leave, others have included holidays within the work group and training for inspectors who are being certified for combination inspections. Mr. Zimmerman is hopeful with the three new residential electrical inspectors that came on board on Jan 7 will help with the backlog but did note that it will take some more time before these inspectors get accustomed to the procedures before seeing the results turn for the good. Marty Starrett with Commercial electrical inspections explains to the board that his staff is approximately a day or two behind at the worst and are loaning two commercial electrical inspectors to the residential staff to assist with their backlog. Board chair would like to see the staff improve the re-inspection time frame that it takes after the initial inspection fails. Currently after it fails, it is taking another week for the re-inspection adding to a two week one process inspection. DSD staff will look into after new employees are accustomed to their positions. Also DSD staff informs the board that the after hour billing has been billed incorrectly and that the new billing is for the first hour only, an additional fee will be added for the next half hour or hour depending on the length of the inspection.
- e. Introduction to Chief Building Inspector- Rick Holloway-** has been with the City of Austin Planning and Development and Development Service Dept. for 12 years now. His responsibilities are to include overseeing the supervisors over Residential and Commercial building inspections and to implement any or all new programs to the inspection team for team development. Currently he is assisting with his supervisors on getting timely inspections numbers back up with quality inspection services. Also Vice Chair Johnson brought up the idea a prefer method of communication to inspection staff. Staff will get a vote and update the board.

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- a.** Update from Work Group
- b.** Update on Austin Criteria Manual
- c.** Update on contractor registration
- d.** Update on Inspections.

6. ADJOURN:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Board member Bowne and second by Goss for a 7-0 vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.